Persons of Interest: Mentoring Relationships in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *Maria: Or, The Wrongs of Woman* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

by

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April, 2014

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My thesis sets a focus on mentorship and the effects it has on literary characters, mainly female characters. Mentorship does not receive much focus from literary critics, despite its power and ability to help a mentee develop their lives and self-worth. I assert that mentoring relationships play a role in texts as a factor strengthening friendships and marriages. In my exploration of mentorship, I examine various relationships in literature, such as abusive relationships, teacher-student relationships, and love relationships, to point out the ways in which mentoring relationships can and cannot exist. The thesis also examines the limitations of mentoring relationships, as well as the factors causing these limitations.

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A Thesis

Presented To the Faculty of the Department of English

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

of Master of Arts, English

by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the two people who have inspired me the most to work toward meeting my goals in life, no matter how hard the struggle. Although they sadly did not live to see the completion of the thesis, their lessons remain with me to this day.

I therefore dedicate this work to my grandmother, Clara Mae Morris Mackey, and my great-grandmother, Gennie Morris “Momma Gennie” Howard.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my thesis committee for the assistance and support they have provided throughout the thesis process from start to finish. Even in times when I thought it was no help, but rather unnecessary aggravation, their advice and suggestions were far more helpful than I would have imagined. Thank you for your encouragement and words, and for the push I needed to get my butt into gear throughout the stages of the thesis.

I wish to thank the faculty and fellow graduate students in the English Department for the encouragement and support provided over the last year and throughout my graduate career at East Carolina University.

I wish to thank my family for having faith in me and offering an endless amount of support, love, and praise during the last three years of my time as a graduate student. I love you all.

I wish to thank my friends for standing by my side, refusing to let me give up whenever I felt the challenges I've faced were too much to contend with, providing a listening ear whenever I needed to talk about my studies, work, stressful moments, or even anything in general. Without you, I would have crashed and burned long ago, ready to throw in the towel. You've helped me avoid such a fate, and I love you all for it.

Finally, I wish to thank The One for helping me through all my difficulty and challenges. I certainly would not be where I am now without You.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction: From Wollstonecraft the Feminist to Wollstonecraft the Mentor

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* has been viewed not only as a text examining the flaws in Romantic-era marriages due to men deeming women as incapable of rational thought, but as a text calling for a rational education for women to help them elevate their role in society and the household. I admit I've read the text in such a way initially, but after reading the texts *Maria: or, the Wrongs of Woman* and *Jane Eyre,* I view *Vindication* as a text that does not solely criticize a patriarchal society and champion women's rights. Rather, I view *Vindication* as a text that also helps readers understand the importance of male mentorship and the effects it has on women. The perspective I offer is that these three texts work together to point out the ways in which male mentorship and behavior play a key role in women's happiness and their overall intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development.

Mentorship does not receive much discussion between Wollstonecraft and Brontë critics on its power and ability to mold lives. I consider it necessary for us as readers to focus on mentorship as a major underlying issue contributing to female development and empowerment, rather than just focusing on the males serving as oppressive figures. While it is true that there are male oppressors in the texts, Wollstonecraft and Brontë's depictions behaviors allow the reader to see the contrast between the oppressors and the characters capable of taking on a mentorship role.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *mentor* comes from "the name of a character in F. de S. de la Mothe-Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), after ancient Greek Μέντωρ, the name of a character in the Odyssey, in whose likeness Athena appears to Telemachus and acts as his guide and adviser" (*OED*). The *OED* further defines a mentor as "a person who acts as guide and adviser to another person, esp. one who is younger and less

experienced" (1a). Anthony Lee provides a broader definition, arguing that mentorship can involve young mentors and older protégés; it can involve relationships in which the parties don't meet, as in symbolic mentoring (2). Keeping in mind the *Dictionary's* and Lee's definitions, I consider the traits essential to a mentoring relationship to include an active interest in advising a mentee to think for herself and work toward making decisions benefitting her intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development. These traits are shown, for instance, in Maria's letters to her daughter, Miss Temple's conversation with Jane during her time at Lowood School, and Rochester's relationship with Jane. Additionally, I consider a mentor to be a person who is not abusive toward their mentee, a trait lacking in characters such as Darnford and Mr. Brocklehurst.

Over the course of my research, I notice that critics such as Marjean D. Purinton, Eileen Hunt Botting, and Christine Carey view *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* as a text impacting feminists and women's rights advocates, especially during the 19th century. Purinton goes even further to note that the selections in her review "point to the interest and usefulness of Mary Wollstonecraft as a feminist thinker for us as postmodernists" (175). Similarly, Botting and Carey view Wollstonecraft's philosophies in *Vindication* as philosophies that "navigated an influential course through nineteenth-century American political thought" (707). In consideration of the critics' views, I argue that *Vindication* points out the interest and usefulness of Wollstonecraft as an advocate for mentorship as well.

The majority of the behaviors Wollstonecraft and Brontë present in their texts as oppressive are in violation of philosophies Wollstonecraft sets forth in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* An empowering feminist author, Mary Wollstonecraft writes the text to advocate for women's advancement. Throughout the text, Wollstonecraft describes the current state of women in the British Romantic era, discussing the ways in which women in the home

and society are viewed as inferior to men and offering her input toward resolving her grievances. In her discussion, Wollstonecraft cites issues such as overindulgence in passion and a lack of parental guidance and affection as factors contributing to women's stunted development as rational thinkers, factors she emphasizes in *Maria* as the result of the absence of strong mentoring in the early lives of Jemima and Maria. My main areas of focus in *Vindication* regard parental affection and guidance, as well as Wollstonecraft's calls for a rational education for women so that they may develop a meaningful and effective relationship with their husband and family.

Wollstonecraft begins *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* with a letter to M. Talleyrand-Perigord advocating for women to have a more productive education: "My main argument is built on this simple principle, that if [woman] be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice" (17). Wollstonecraft further asserts that Talleyrand-Perigord is much like a tyrant, asking, "Do you not act a similar part, when you *force* all women, by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark?" (18). The statements are some of the first moments I view as a call for males to take on a role as effective mentors in order to prevent the destruction of a meaningful society. Even though she pleads a case for men to provide women with the human rights they deserve, Wollstonecraft indicates that in order for women to be able to gain those rights, they must be able to develop an education outside the "norm" she discusses later in the text. She also points out that coercion is not conducive to a just society, arguing that without it, "the sexes will fall into their proper places" (18). Her words further illustrate the idea that coercion and unnecessary force hinders the development of

women, and in turn, men. While the statement indicates a focus on coercion negatively impacting a marriage, I extend the focus to coercion's impact on society and a woman's ability to interact effectively with others, as well as the connection between coercion and a lack of mentorship in *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman* and *Jane Eyre*.

In her discussion of the roles and duties of fathers, Wollstonecraft ends her passage by stating, "If women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they shall render both men and themselves vicious, to obtain illicit privileges" (19). In the passage, Wollstonecraft notes that men who fail to fulfill their duty as fathers are hypocritical for expecting women to fulfill their duty as mothers. I expand the statement to encompass men who take on an authority role as a mentor to women. The ability of the male characters in *Maria* and *Jane Eyre* to serve as positive mentors is developed by the males' willingness to allow the female characters to enjoy privileges they are entitled to as human beings, a concept that parallels Wollstonecraft's philosophy regarding male duty. She further displays the need for mentorship in Chapter II of *Vindication* by stating that men "act in a very unphilosophical manner when they try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood" (37). The "state of childhood" and innocence Wollstonecraft discusses implies a lack of mentorship; children in a state of innocence have not developed a strong ability to reason and communicate to a level that provides fulfillment and happiness for their later lives. To combat that, Wollstonecraft points out that a rational education is crucial to women overcoming the state of childhood and innocence. Ruth Abbey summarizes Wollstonecraft's claim as follows*:* "If women are more broadly educated, they would be better placed to carry out their educative duties as parents and to cooperate with men in this role" (83). The "broad education" Abbey discusses encompasses

matters outside the home, such as women's development as mentors in their own right. In order to reach that level, however, it is up to males to mentor females..

Wollstonecraft's criticism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is worth mentioning as well, as she accuses Rousseau not only of viewing women as entities who only serve to fulfill the desires and wishes of men, but also of not providing women a substantial education. In *Émile,* Rousseau writes, "The men depend on the women only on account of their desires; the women on the men both on account of their desires and their necessities: we could subsist better without them than they without us" (qtd. in Wollstonecraft 104); his words indicate that he does not value women as people capable of functioning on their own and imply a dismissal to guide women into developing their role as a being incapable of anything except relying on men to survive. He also states that "the education of women should be always relative to the men. To please, to be useful to us, to make us love and esteem them, to educate us when young, and take care of us when grown up, to advise, to console us, to render our lives easy and agreeable: these are the duties of women at all times, and what they should be taught in their infancy" (qtd. in Wollstonecraft 104). In response to his philosophy, Wollstonecraft challenges, "He did not go back to nature, or his ruling appetite disturbed the operations of reason, else he would not have drawn these crude inferences" (106). Rousseau's ideology focuses on women as servant-like figures who exist to serve men, relieving them of difficulty. However, Wollstonecraft considers women to be more than servants, but as separate beings capable of thinking and living for themselves, not just for men. She suggests that women seeking to help their daughters gain dignity as people should "proceed on a plan diametrically opposite to that which Rousseau has recommended with all the deluding charms of eloquence and philosophical sophistry" (60). I view the suggestion as an

argument that women should seek knowledge for themselves, but that men should work to help women gain that knowledge without expecting women to follow their own sense of knowledge.

The final chapter of *Vindication* provides powerful proof of Wollstonecraft's emphasis the need for positive mentorship. At the beginning of Chapter XIII, Wollstonecraft states, "To render women truly useful members of society, I argue that they should be led, by having their undertakings cultivated on a large scale, to acquire a rational affection for their country, founded on knowledge, because it is obvious that we are little interested about what we do not understand" (229). Through education, Wollstonecraft indicates that women can learn to develop themselves as intellectuals capable of actively appreciating knowledge and patriotism.

Wollstonecraft suggests that men engage with women by mentoring them and acknowledging their ability to grow mentally and emotionally, instead of abusing them. In the following chapters of my thesis, I examine the ways in which Wollstonecraft's ideal of mentorship recurs and develops in later texts: Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel*, Maria*, and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre.* In Chapter Two, the effects of a lack of mentorship appear in Wollstonecraft's representation of Maria and Jemima's lives in *Maria; Or, the Wrongs of Woman*. Both characters, according to their life stories, were subjected to hardships in their early lives, triggered by various faults on the part of male authority figures. Wollstonecraft shapes their histories to help the reader understand how women are oppressed and viewed in late-eighteenth-century society, as well as how some women, such as Maria, behave in ways that bolster those stereotypes. Wollstonecraft shows that the males in the text, primarily George Venables, Henry Darnford, and Jemima's master exhibit behaviors not conducive to female characters' well-being on several occasions, as they are guilty of violating the core principles and beliefs Wollstonecraft discusses in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* With the exception of

Maria's uncle, who connects most strongly to Wollstonecraft's version of an ideal male mentor, the men are incapable of mentoring women because of their abusive demeanor and lack of interest in the women's well-being. However, Wollstonecraft shows in the novel that the men's oppressive behavior leads women to become mentors in their own right. For instance, Maria and Jemima mentor others through writing memoirs and telling stories regarding the oppression impacting their lives. Much of the current scholarship on *Maria* focuses on male oppression within the text and offers insight into the struggles Maria and Jemima face at the hands of their families and masters. While I agree that the behavior of their families and masters is indeed oppressive in nature, I will use my study of the critical sources focusing on oppression to help draw examples depicting the ways in which oppressed women mentor others, such as scenes in which Jemima mentors Maria and Maria mentors her daughter.

I also focus on Darnford and Maria's relationship, because even though he appears to take on an interest in Maria's life early in the novel, Wollstonecraft portrays him as a seducer similar to George Venables. Yet, Maria desires to have him as a mentor-lover, allowing her passion for him to lock her into another cycle of oppression, much like George did when she began a relationship with him. The mentor-lover relationship becomes complicated in this case, because while Maria wishes to have Darnford as a mentor and a lover, the men in her past who she viewed as lovers abused her. According to Margaret Kathryn Sloan, "The representation of Maria falling in love with Darnford serves as a cautionary warning for future readers and a message of hope for this and the next generation" (228). Keeping Sloan's statement in mind, I discuss the ways in which Wollstonecraft's depiction serves as a warning, as well as how Maria's memoirs are a message of hope and warning for her daughter.

Chapter Three of my thesis explores Wollstonecraft's ideal mentoring relationship by focusing on Brontë's illustrations of the force male characters have on Jane Eyre's life over the course of *Jane Eyre*. Beginning with her fight with John Reed in the early part of the novel, the development of Jane's ability to reason and find fulfillment is an ongoing process. Unlike Wollstonecraft's depictions of male-female relationships in *Maria; Or, the Wrongs of Woman,* Brontë does not depict male-female relationships strictly as oppressive in nature, particularly in her illustration of Jane's relationships with St. John Rivers and Rochester. Rather, she uses these relationships to show the potential of a male to become a mentor to a female, as well as to allow the reader to understand the ambivalence present in the nature of male-female relationships. While I concede that these two men do not always mentor in a positive manner through their words and deeds, they do have moments where they redeem themselves as positive forces in Jane's life. Most of the criticism directed at the novel focuses on Jane's development, from her time in the Reed household to her marriage to Rochester. In order to align my views with my thesis' central focus, I examine Jane's development and relationship with the male characters in the novel to show how male mentorship plays a role in the novel, as well as the ways in which men do not mentor Jane. In particular, I examine Rochester's role as a mentor, because we see that he develops his ability to mentor over the course of the novel. He does not mentor in a "positive" manner at the start, but unlike male characters such as George, Mr. Brocklehurst, and even John Reed, Rochester eventually mentors Jane in a positive manner as her "mentor-lover" (Menon #).

In considering Wollstonecraft's ideas, I argue that *Maria* and *Jane Eyre* help us understand their role as texts regarding significant mentorship, as we see moments in the novels depicting the men's adherence or violations of the ideas and requests Wollstonecraft places forth.

The forms the adherence and violations take are broad in nature and number, but they allow us to get an overall idea of how Wollstonecraft's principles are reflected through the men and their interactions with women throughout the course of the novels. Not all the men are mentors, but their traits help the reader see the differences between oppressive men and men who develop into mentors, as well the impact the oppressors and mentors have on the development and happiness of women.

Chapter Two: A Rock and a Hard Place: Mentorship, Communication, and "Love" Relationships in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman*

As critics have long argued, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woma*n depicts male oppression against female characters and the consequences resulting from the oppression. The major male characters, such as Maria's husband George and Jemima's father and master, do not take on a positive role in the women's lives, but ignores or actively harms them. Despite their supposed "authority" role, they lack the capacity to be mentors. The novel also explores mentorship by having women mentor each other by sharing their life stories with each other. Maria is a fictionalization of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* but one key difference between the works is the discussion of relationships built on lust. Wollstonecraft places a greater focus on lust and its consequences in *Maria,* while providing a more general focus on relationships between men and women in *Vindication.*

Not only does the novel explore the extent to which a character is able to mentor others, as well as the reasons why some characters cannot mentor, but the relationships depicted in the novel and the inability of certain characters to mentor tie in to Wollstonecraft's criticisms of the institutions and systems entrapping women. Two of the main institutions she criticizes are the institution of family, mainly in regards to Maria's father's role as the abusive head of his house, and the institution of marriage and intimate relationships. Maria's marriage to George and his status as husband and seducer serve as an example.

Wollstonecraft presents the idea that people, especially men, who willfully and continuously abuse women by dismissing their desires and not paying attention to them cannot serve as effective mentors for them. For example, Maria's father shows that he is not interested in his daughter's well-being – or for that matter, the well-being of the members of his household,

save that of his eldest son, Robert. Instead, he builds his status as head of household on fear. As Maria points out, her father was "determined to keep up the same passive obedience, as in the vessels in which he had commanded" (294) in the running of the household. The determination is an indication of power, a tool he uses in order to drive his family into submission to his demands out of fear of consequence of not doing so. Because Maria's father is the head of the household, Wollstonecraft gives the reader the sense that he will guide and teach his children to become productive citizens. However, the only teaching moment he provides is to teach his son to become an abuser.

Wollstonecraft further shows the consequences of Maria's father's control over his household and family by depicting the relationship between the father and Maria's brother Robert: "My eldest brother, it is true, as he grew up, was treated with more respect by my father; and became in due form the deputy-tyrant of the house" (294). Rather than extending his devotion to all of his children, the father invested more of his time in helping her brother develop into a "man," leaving his other children without a guide in their lives. Yet, that "development" only leads to a new cycle of abuse. Not only does the father take on an abusive role and display complete disregard for women, as Wollstonecraft illustrates chiefly in the relationship he has with Maria and her mother, but he teaches his son to follow the same pattern as well. Wollstonecraft indicates that the only kind of "conversation" occurring between Maria's father and his family, save for Robert, is one of abuse. She uses as an example a scene in which Maria raises her grievances regarding her brother's ill behavior toward her. When Maria speaks to her father, she "was rudely rebuffed for presuming to judge of the conduct of [her] eldest brother" (297). Her father does not have an interest in relieving Maria's suffering or helping her seek a method of overcoming her misery, but chooses instead to criticize her for attempting to stand

against her brother and challenge his authority in the household. In using this scene, Wollstonecraft clarifies the father's role as an abuser, because he encourages Robert's ill demeanor even further, even when Robert's abuse affects him as well. The scene also echoes Wollstonecraft's concern in *Vindication* regarding men keeping women in a "state of perpetual childhood" (25). Wollstonecraft implies in *Vindication* that children have not developed a sense of rationality, and that they need a mentor to help them develop that sense. Yet, Wollstonecraft shows that Maria's parents are not able to take on such a role because they have no interest in helping Maria develop as a rational thinker.

Wollstonecraft uses the illustration of the father-daughter relationship between Maria and her father to demonstrate one of her philosophies in *Vindication* at work. In *Vindication*, she writes, "how absurd and tyrannic it is thus to lay down a system of slavery; or to attempt to educate moral beings by any other rules than those deduced from pure reason, which apply to the whole species" (301). The depiction of the relationship between Maria and her father indicates a system of slavery in *Maria*, and Wollstonecraft uses the tyranny of both Maria's father and Robert to display them as "masters." As a result, Wollstonecraft indicates that Maria's father and brother cannot engage in self-conscious mentorship, because the characters do not make an effort to guide Maria at a young age. Rather, their method of teaching is not only through abuse, but also through dismissing Maria whenever she informs them of any problems she has and not working with her to resolve those issues.

George Venables is another man in Maria's life who cannot develop into the role of a mentor. In *Vindication,* Wollstonecraft states, "When virtue or honour make it proper to check a passion, the burden is thrown on the weaker shoulders, contrary to reason and true modesty, which, at least, should render the self-denial mutual" (155). Her words imply that men expect

women to be chaste and control their passions, yet men fail to uphold those same standards. Wollstonecraft shows this implication in George Venables, describing his character through Maria's eyes,

> George had acquired habits of libertinism, which he carefully concealed from his father and his commercial connections. The mask he wore, was so complete a covering of his real visage, that the praise his father lavished on his conduct, and, poor mistaken man! on his principles, contrasted with his brothers, rendered the notice he took of me peculiarly flattering. (298)

The description gives the reader the perception that George is a seducer who seeks to take advantage of Maria. Wollstonecraft uses the "love" he had for Maria to show that George does not display genuine, meaningful love, but rather his ability to resort to flattery and dishonesty in order to get Maria to fall under his spell.

One of the major scenes depicting George's flattery occurs in Chapter VII, when Maria recalls their first meeting, "This man of the world, with rosy face and simpering features, received me politely, nay kindly; listened with complacency to my remonstrances, though he scarcely heeded Mary's tears. I did not then suspect, that my eloquence was in my complexion, the blush of seventeen, or that, in a world where humanity to women is the characteristic of advancing civilization, the beauty of a young girl was so much more interesting than the distress of an old one" (301). Wollstonecraft uses the scene as an early example demonstrating George's inability to converse with others. While he is infatuated with Maria's appearance and gives her the idea that he is interested in her company, George shows no regard for Maria's nurse Mary's tears, a moment Wollstonecraft uses to show that George does not have an interest in a person's emotional state, and thus, is not able to guide and mentor the person. Rather than talk to Mary

and find out why she was crying, George overlooks her and proves that he only has eyes for Maria.

Wollstonecraft's depiction of the meeting between George and Maria foreshadows a later scene in the novel, where she shows that George is truly unable to converse with his wife. Wollstonecraft further informs the reader of Maria and George's deteriorating marriage in Chapter IX when Maria states, "With all my attention and affectionate interest, I perceived that I could not become the friend or confident of my husband. Every thing I learned relative to his affairs I gathered up by accident, and I vainly endeavoured to establish, at our fire-side, that social converse, which often renders people of different characters dear to each other" (309). The passage indicates George's unsuitability as a mentor. Wollstonecraft implies that, after Maria's accidental discovery of his affairs, George continues to be dishonest and unwilling to open up to Maria and inform her of his doings, shutting off communication necessary in a mentoring relationship. Wollstonecraft further indicates George's unwillingness to be honest and forthright with Maria through Maria's failed attempts to converse with George in their own home, even in matters that could further strengthen their relationship.

Wollstonecraft discusses in *Vindication* the importance of friendship and honesty within a marriage. She argues, "the security of marriage, allowing the fever of love to subside, a healthy temperature is thought insipid, only by those who have not sufficient intellect to substitute the calm tenderness of friendship, the confidence of respect, instead of blind admiration, and the sensual emotions of fondness" (300). By indicating that Maria had a "blind admiration" of George before the marriage, Wollstonecraft indicates through her philosophy that Maria and George's marriage cannot be secure, especially as she shows George has lack of interest in Maria's well-being or conversing with Maria. Even though she provides a bleak depiction of the

marriage, Wollstonecraft uses the scene to indicate that she values openness and friendship not just in a marriage, but also in a mentoring relationship. As the marriage lacks those two traits, Wollstonecraft allows the reader to understand how such a relationship is not able to develop between George and Maria.

Another example Wollstonecraft presents regarding a male character's inability to mentor is the character of Darnford. Maria indicates in her letters that while she views characters such as George and her father as oppressors, she views Darnford as a friend and potential lover – desiring to have him as a "mentor-lover" (Menon #). However, even though she does not present major scenes depicting Darnford as an abuser, Wollstonecraft gives him traits similar to George Venables. Wollstonecraft also uses Maria's view of Darnford and the consequences resulting from her desire to have him as a mentor-lover to strengthen her philosophy regarding a woman's infatuation with men. In defining the term "mentor-lover," Patricia Menon discusses "the nature of sexual love and its links to the attributes of the mentor – power, judgment, and moral authority" (1). The power, judgment, and moral authority refer to a mentor's capacity to positively guide others to think and live for themselves, traits Darnford does not exhibit in *Maria* due to his womanizing demeanor. Yet, Maria's love for Darnford helps continue the cycle of abuse in which she had been trapped previously. Maria's passion ties into a point Wollstonecraft makes in *Vindication*, "I cannot discover why…females should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust" (45). Her statement implies that an unchecked desire for a man's love is a factor hindering a woman's ability to develop rational thought and keeping them locked in a cycle of oppression.

In his first letter to Jemima, Darnford writes, "I will enquire, why you are so mysteriously detained – and I will have an answer" (263). The line implies that Darnford has an interest in

Maria's life during his early encounters with her, as is the case with George Venables. Wollstonecraft continues to give further insight to Darnford's character by presenting a parallel between his and Maria's early life. As Darnford points out in his letter, "My father and mother were people of fashion; married by their parents…My father and mother had a visible dislike to each other, continually displayed" (266). In the statement, Darnford indicates that his parents had a loveless marriage, much like Maria's parents. His description implies that Maria may be able to relate to him, because of the similarities between their childhoods.

A major scene Wollstonecraft uses to show the developing relationship between Darnford and Maria occurs after Darnford reads Maria's memoirs to her daughter. Maria explains that after returning the letters, Darnford "told her how much he wished to restore her to liberty and love; but he kissed her hand, as if it had been that of a saint; and spoke of the loss of her child, as if it had been his own" (344). Wollstonecraft uses the scene to show that his concern wins Maria over. As the narrator later states, "What could have been more flattering to Maria? – Every instance of self-denial was registered in her heart, and she loved him" (345). Maria's love for Darnford indicates that she not only does not fear Darnford, but she views him as a mentor-lover.

Diane Long Hoeveler makes a crucial point in her article, one concerning the Maria-Darnford relationship. She states in regards to Darnford, "The narrator suggests to us that he is no more worthy of trust than was the awful Venables. Why is Maria so partial to trusting men when they have brought her nothing but misery?" (387). In making her argument, Hoeveler considers the fragmented endings to *Maria,* particularly the sixth ending. She notes that the sixth ending "has Maria…deserted by Darnford, pregnant, miscarrying, and then committing suicide" (404) and asserts that the ending is "the truest one to the text of the novel as a whole" (404). Hoeveler points out that Wollstonecraft depicts Darnford as a character unworthy of Maria's

trust, and Wollstonecraft's depiction is further bolstered in particular by the fifth and sixth fragmented endings, which indicate that Darnford not only impregnated Maria, but also deserted her. These two endings in particular give the reader the idea that Darnford lacks responsibility for his actions, as he leaves Maria and her daughter to fend for themselves and does not take on a role as a father and husband. Darnford resembles Jemima's master, as he deserts Jemima after he rapes and impregnates her. The parallel in turn gives credibility to Hoeveler's argument that Darnford is not worthy of trust because of the similarities between his character and Jemima's master. Darnford's lack of trustworthiness is a factor preventing him from becoming a mentor, illustrated even further when he abandons Maria at a significant point in her life.

However, Wollstonecraft does show hope for a male to potentially serve as a female's mentor through the depiction of Maria's uncle. Maria states, "To my uncle I ventured to open my heart; and he, with his wonted benevolence, began to consider in what manner he could extricate me out of my present irksome situation" (304). Maria's conversation with her uncle occurs as a result of Maria's desire to escape her home, and the passage indicates her uncle's willingness to help her. However, he unwittingly sets George's cycle of abuse in motion, as Maria discovers in another scene that "[her] uncle had promised George five thousand pounds" (305). She implies that her uncle is to blame for George's abuse, because she did not know that the uncle's strategy to help her escape her current state of misery involved marriage. Maria also claims that her uncle's silence in regards to her dowry did not help her see the man George is, as she claims that if she knew of the dowry arrangement, "I would have insisted on a thousand pounds being settled on each of my sisters; George would have contested; I should have seen his selfish soul; and…have been spared the misery of discovering, when too late, that I was united to a heartless, unprincipled wretch" (305). The passage implies that Maria did not view her uncle as a mentor

early in her narrative, because he did not protect her from the misery in store for her once she married George.

However, Maria does give the reader the idea that she forgave her uncle and that he redeemed himself in Chapters X and XIII. Before her uncle leaves, he tells Maria, "I am far from thinking that a woman, once married, ought to consider the engagement as indissoluble…in case her husband merits neither her love, nor esteem" (319). These words ultimately give Maria the courage to attempt to escape George and her unhappy marriage, as her uncle believes that Maria should not remain locked in a miserable marriage to a man who ultimately proves he does not care about his wife and does not have a sense of morals. Her uncle's words imply that he is critical of a loveless marriage, as well as a marriage where a male has no moral sense and does not deserve his wife's love. The scene itself ties into one of Wollstonecraft's main points regarding friendship in a marriage, as Wollstonecraft states, "Personal attachment is a very happy foundation for friendship" (97). The attachment does not exist in Maria and George's marriage, which indicates further that the marriage is set to fail. Because of this, her uncle attempts to help Maria escape her miserable marriage, so that she may develop a sense of happiness and live for herself without having to contend with George.

Wollstonecraft also depicts through Jemima's character and history the ways in which men are incapable of mentoring. Wollstonecraft depicts the men in Jemima's early life, such as her father and master, as men unwilling to communicate with Jemima. In *Vindication,* Wollstonecraft advocates for meaningful relationships between children and their parents by stating, "But a child, though a pledge of affection, will not enliven it, if both father and mother be content to transfer the charge to hirelings" (185). Considering the consequences resulting from a violation of her philosophy, Wollstonecraft presents the reader with a scene illustrating

Jemima's father's unwillingness to communicate with his family, as "[Jemima's mother] became distasteful to him; and he began to hate, as well as despise me, before I was born" (274). Jemima states that her father "the care of the cheapest nurse [Jemima's] father could find; who suckled her own child at the same time" (274). In doing so, Wollstonecraft bolsters the idea that Jemima's father is not interested in her well-being, even at an early age. Jemima also describes her father as a seducer, stating, "My father seduced my mother, a pretty girl, with whom he lived fellow servant" (273). Moreover, Wollstonecraft indicates that there was no chance of Jemima's father being capable of conversation with his wife, because according to Jemima, "[her mother's] incessant importunities…estranged him from her so completely, that her very person became distasteful to him" (274). Much like Maria's parents' marriage, Jemima's parents' marriage is one of convenience, particularly as Jemima's father promised to marry her "in the fervour of seduction" (274). The statement indicates that Jemima's father made a rash promise without giving serious thought to the consequences of his marriage. Jemima's telling of how her parents' marriage originated further implies that the marriage is loveless, to the point where her father developed a hatred of his wife.

Wollstonecraft uses the portrayals to show that meaningful conversation cannot exist in such relationships. As a result, Jemima's father is not capable of acting as a mentor to his family, nor is he capable of learning how to improve his relationship with his wife and daughter. The inability continues into a scene occurring after Jemima's mother dies, because Wollstonecraft shows that Jemima's father placed her under "the care of the cheapest nurse [Jemima's] father could find; who suckled her own child at the same time" (274).

The relationship between Jemima and her stepmother further illustrates a lack of mentorship. Wollstonecraft uses Jemima's stepmother to illustrate further a lack of concern and

interest in Jemima's life, an issue illustrated when Jemima attempts to kiss her. According to Jemima, her stepmother pushed her away, saying, "I do not want you, pert thing!" (275). While Wollstonecraft shows the reader that the stepmother did not love Jemima, treating her as a slave instead of a stepchild, the scene depicting the stepmother's curt dismissal provides solid proof that the stepmother wanted nothing to do with Jemima. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft depicts the stepmother in this scene as an emotional abuser. The emotional abuse continues further, when Wollstonecraft presents a later scene showing the consequences resulting when Jemima stole sweets. The stepmother alerted Jemima's father to the theft, who decided to "recount [her] faults, and attribute them to the wicked disposition which [she] had brought into the world with [her], inherited from [her] mother" (276). In this scene, Wollstonecraft shows that neither the father nor the stepmother took the time to teach Jemima to not steal or how to get the things she desired, but relied on emotional and even physical abuse as a teaching mechanism.

Another scene depicting an abusive relationship occurs later in Jemima's story. Wollstonecraft uses the relationship between Jemima and her masters as an example of an abusive relationship where mentorship cannot exist. In Jemima's story, Jemima's masters subject her to beatings and insults, in an effort to teach her to remain quiet and obey their commands. One such example occurs when Jemima talks about moments where she was caught stealing food; her masters silenced her with "Hold your tongue, you never tell truth!" (277). The masters are under a misconception that Jemima is not honest, and make the effort to "teach" her to tell the truth.

The major scene illustrating the abuse occurs when Jemima's male master rapes her: "When the family were at a methodist meeting, he contrived to be alone in the house with me, and by blows – yes; blows and menaces, compelled me to submit to his ferocious desire" (278).

Wollstonecraft uses the rape to illustrate the lack of potential for the relationship to turn into a mentoring relationship, as Jemima's master not only beats her, but also uses fear tactics to coerce Jemima into submitting to him. Wollstonecraft's use of the fear tactic is also evident in the relationship between Maria's father and Maria, and she decides to escalate the "fear"-inducing factor in the rape scene to teach the reader that abusive, controlling figures are incapable of mentoring others.

Subsequently, Wollstonecraft allows the reader to see the master's lack of mentorship when Jemima returns to his home. According to Jemima, the master refused to acknowledge her; "he damned [Jemima] for a b-, declared [she] had disturbed the peace of the family, and that he had sworn to his wife, never to take any more notice of [her]" (Wollstonecraft 280). Wollstonecraft uses the scene to further show the master's unworthiness to become a mentor to anyone; not only is the master guilty of gross abuse, but Wollstonecraft indicates that he is not willing to acknowledge his fault or take any kind of responsibility. In fact, Wollstonecraft poses the idea that the master is placing Jemima at fault for the rape, when the master says that Jemima had "disturbed the peace of the family." As irrational as the master's mindset is, Wollstonecraft uses him to imply that a mentor has to be able to take responsibility for their mistakes, as well as to point out to readers that abusers are not capable of fostering a meaningful mentoring relationship with others. In addition, Wollstonecraft uses the mistress' requirement that the master not associate with Jemima any longer to show the master's inability to make a self-conscious decision on his own.

However, by having Jemima telling her life story, Wollstonecraft shows how Jemima develops her role as a mentor in spite of her hardships, as Jemima guides Maria and Darnford toward telling their own life stories. Toward the end of Chapter V, during Maria and Darnford's

meeting, Jemima "was so softened by the air of confidence which breathed around her, that she voluntarily began an account of herself" (273). Wollstonecraft uses the scene to show Jemima's understanding of when she should step in and converse with Darnford and Maria. This moment indicates Jemima's prudent nature, as well as her ability to rise to the occasion when she needs to take on a mentoring role. She waited until an appropriate moment to talk with Darnford and Maria, rather than charge forward and tell her story.

Jemima's story does double duty in terms of intended effects. In particular, the harsh details within the story, namely her discussion of her master raping her, implies Jemima's interest in having Maria and Darnford gain the confidence and desire to share their stories. In fact, Wollstonecraft uses the conversation between Darnford and Maria to show that the two characters, albeit indirectly, are able to serve as mentors to Jemima. Their conversation gives Jemima the courage to open up to Darnford and Maria, a trait Wollstonecraft indicates is essential to positive mentoring. According to Robin Runia, "Jemima begs for sympathy, the lack of which she has so far suffered" (101). However, Jemima does not beg for sympathy as she tells her story, but opens up to Darnford and Maria and encourages them to share their own life stories with each other. Moreover, Jemima provides deeper details in her story, which helps the reader gain a better understanding of her character and her role as a mentor. As a result of her opening up with her life story, Jemima gives Maria the drive to write memoirs to her daughter, telling her daughter about the hardships she suffered at the hands of her family and husband, as well as offering guidance for her daughter to avoid the same cycle of oppression she lived in.

Her story also provides insight to the male viewpoints concerning women, namely prostitutes. When Darnford tells his story, he shows contempt for women of ill repute, stating, "I was taught to love by a creature I am ashamed to mention; and the other women with whom I

afterwards became intimate, were of a class of which you can have no knowledge" (266). While he flatters Maria by implying that she is not a prostitute and has no knowledge of prostitution and vulgarity, his words illustrate the contempt he has for prostitutes as women without morals. However, Jemima complicates Darnford's story when she tells hers, as she herself turned to prostitution after being cast out of her master's home. Jemima indicates that her prostitution was a result of her struggle to survive, and she implies that the prostitution conflicts with her emotions, as she says that she "was some time before [she] could prevail on [herself] to accept of a place in a house of ill fame" (281). Her statement clashes with Darnford's opinion that prostitutes lack virtue and bolster the idea that women who prostitute do not do so because of a lack of morals, but out of the need to survive.

Writers Timothy Erwin and Colleen Fenno set up a dispute regarding Wollstonecraft's motives behind her writing of Jemima's story. Erwin writes in his essay of *Maria* that Wollstonecraft uses the character of Jemima to provide "brief yet moving fictional autobiographies of women decoyed into sexual dependence" (679). His words imply that Jemima is dependent on men; Jemima, however, indicates that she is not dependent on men and is able to discuss the ways in which the major male figures in her life have affected her. Conversely, Colleen Fenno argues that "Wollstonecraft empowers Jemima as an agent that gains autonomy through the novel not only because she allows her character first-person control over her own narrative, but also because she gains confidence and develops trust in others as she tells her story and her experiences are recognized" (Fenno 10). Fenno's position is that Wollstonecraft depicts Jemima as a mentor, because when Jemima tells her story, Wollstonecraft sets the stage for Maria and Darnford to develop themselves as mentors for others, since they share their life stories with others, guiding by example. While Wollstonecraft does write about Jemima's telling

of her rape and prostitution, it is not to show that Jemima is sexually dependent. Rather, she uses Jemima's discussion of her rape to prove Jemima's ability to open up to strangers and get them to become comfortable with telling their life stories as well – likely in an effort to continue the cycle for others and offer a sense of hope for people who are in difficulty.

Wollstonecraft's emphasis on the importance of conversation extends to letter writing as well. For example, Wollstonecraft employs her strategy through Maria's letters to her daughter, showing that Maria has an interest in her daughter's well-being. At the beginning scene in Chapter VII, Wollstonecraft depicts Maria reflecting on her willingness to guide her daughter: "Addressing these memoirs to you, my child, uncertain whether I shall ever have an opportunity of instructing you, many observations will probably flow from my heart, which only a mother – a mother schooled in misery, could make" (293). While Wollstonecraft indicates that Maria is not able to converse with her daughter in person, she does show that face-to-face conversation is not the only means of conversation a mentor could rely on. According to Maria, the letter's aim is to "lead [her daughter] very early in life to form [her] grand principle of action, to save [her] the vain regret of having, through irresolution, let the spring-tide of existence pass away, unimproved, unenjoyed" (293). To accomplish this, Maria tells her life story and discusses the mistakes she made in marrying George, imploring her daughter to, "warned by my example, always appear what you are, and you will not pass through existence without enjoying its genuine blessings, love and respect" (293). The scene ties into the *OED* definition of mentorship, because Maria is guiding her daughter, "one who is younger and less experienced" (1a).

Patricia Cove acknowledges that Maria "develops a strategy for empowering herself while demonstrating the possibility of reason and sensibility coexisting through her writing, challenging the dualism that excludes reason from the madhouse and the supposedly emotional

female body" (680), which further supports Wollstonecraft's lesson indicating that effective mentorship can occur in writing, and that Maria as a mentor has taken an interest in her daughter's life – a key factor that helps Maria develop and better herself while in the asylum. Similarly, Janet Todd states in regards to Maria's development, "Considering the account of Maria's early education and marriage, we are well able to appreciate her struggle to control her mind in the opening section of the novel" (18). Todd further strengthens the idea that Maria is able to develop as a mentor, because while she acknowledges Maria's struggle, she implies that Maria is able to find some kind of control in her life. Wollstonecraft uses the letter-writing as an avenue for Maria to provide an account of her life and woes to her daughter in the hopes of guiding her – even if it is from afar.

Wollstonecraft uses the characters of Jemima, Darnford, and Maria to show the reader that there is hope for people to become mentors, even if the means they employ are different. However, her depictions indicate one key factor – that the mentorship is effective when it comes from people who are not abusive and who are willing to actively converse with the mentees. As she depicts the three characters as people who have made mistakes in their earlier lives, but are willing to share the stories illustrating their mistakes. In doing so, Wollstonecraft uses the similarities between the men in *Maria* and the men she addresses in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* to show that while the ideal mentorship relationship, especially male-female mentorship does not exist in the earlier stages of M*aria: or, The Wrongs of Woman,* mentoring relationships are possible. Additionally, Wollstonecraft shows the reader that mentorship is not limited to one group of people or type of relationship, but is a relationship that can encompass people of different walks of life and of different classes. So long as a continuous interest in a mentee's life exists, as well as an interest in helping the mentee learn to better themselves and

become more open and willing to interact with others, Wollstonecraft's novel gives the reader hope that a person's spiritual, emotional, and mental development can be enhanced.

Chapter Three: Finding the Real "Jane Eyre": Mentorship and its Limitations in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Brontë depicts the extent to which a mentoring relationship can develop within *Jane Eyre* through methods similar to Mary Wollstonecraft's methods in *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman.* Like Wollstonecraft, Brontë examines familial, educator-student, friend-friend, and marital relationships to develop her depictions within the novel. Also, Brontë emphasizes the importance of conversation and interest between characters to help the reader see the ways in which scenes depicting mentoring – or a lack of it – are established. Her novel is less pessimistic about male authority and mentorship than Wollstonecraft's, as Brontë depicts a stronger potential for males to become mentors. Furthermore, Brontë represents Rochester and St. John Rivers as potential mentor-lovers, men who not only have a sexual relationship with his mentee, but is a figure of power and authority as well (Menon 1). While Brontë critiques male authority in the novel, *Jane Eyre* explores both the limitations affecting a mentoring relationship and the extent to which characters, particularly male characters, are able to mentor.

One of the early examples Brontë presents of a character's inability to mentor occurs early in the novel, during Jane's early childhood at the Reed home, during the fight scene with John Reed. Even though Brontë uses the character in relatively few moments in the text, his exchange with Jane Chapter I is noteworthy, given his degrading attitude toward Jane because of her status as an orphan. When John discovers Jane behind the curtain reading one of the family's books, he tells her, "You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mamma says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mamma's expense" (8). The scene illustrates Wollstonecraft's point in *Vindication*, where she criticizes

men for keeping women "in a state of perpetual childhood" (25), particularly as Brontë depicts John as a character willing to block Jane's access to education.

Brontë uses the scene to show that John is a tyrant-in-the-making, bearing similarities to the men Wollstonecraft criticizes as tyrants. Status is the major factor triggering John's reaction. In *Jane Eyre*, the status issue is in regards to Jane not only being an orphan, but also being penniless, a "dependent" as John derisively points out. Thus, Jane's status indicates that, as long as she is a member of the Reed household, she is unlikely to receive an education. Instead, she is a captive and a target for abuse. Brontë shows how his abuse manifests itself even further when John orders Jane to stand by the door and then throws the book at her. When she cries out, "Wicked and cruel boy! You are like a murderer – you are like a slave-driver – you are like the Roman emperors!" (8). Her insult stems from her reading of Goldsmith's *History of Rome*, especially when she states, that she "formed [her] opinion of Nero, Caligula, &c" (9) and that she had "drawn parallels in silence, which [she] never thought thus to have declared aloud" (9). John's attack triggers an early ability to draw parallels between the emperors and John Reed, given their cruel motives. The passage shows that Jane is capable of gaining a basic education; she not only reads, but she makes an effort to show that she has a basic understanding of what she has read.

Brontë uses his reaction to further bolster John's lack of ability to be a mentor; when he "[runs] headlong at [Jane]" (9) and assaults her, he proves the validity of Jane's claim in regards to his character. Also, he does not acknowledge Jane as being capable of civility, but lowers her being to that of an animal incapable of civility, referring to her twice in Chapter I as a "rat." His character loosely parallels Maria's parents in *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman,* because all three characters quickly and rudely dismiss the women who question the status and power of an

authority figure. Both Maria and Jane have valid reasons for questioning the authority status of their oppressors, and Wollstonecraft and Brontë devote a significant amount of attention to the characters' male relatives, who serve as the de facto heads of household merely because of their gender. However, Brontë uses the fight between John and Jane to further amplify John's role as a tyrant, as opposed to Wollstonecraft's illustration of Maria's interaction with her parents. Brontë also uses the scene as the beginning of a depiction of Jane's development as a woman over the course of the novel. As Michael Vander Weele points out, "the outburst against her cousin John begins a series of life-narratives in which Jane faces the question of self-assertion" (6).

Brontë provides another example of an abusive relationship during Jane's time at the Lowood School, through the headmaster-pupil relationship between Jane and Mr. Brocklehurst. Based on his role as a headmaster and according to Wollstonecraft's idea that men should help women develop intellectually, Mr. Brocklehurst should have mentored Jane in a positive manner. However, such is not the case. The "animal" aspect comes into play again, when Mr. Brocklehurst delivers a pretentious speech about Jane's character. Without taking into account Jane's side of her story in regards to her time at the Reed home, Mr. Brocklehurst orders Jane to be placed on a stool and, in addition to branding Jane a liar without just cause, tells the school,

> "You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example: if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinise her actions, punish her body to save her soul: if, indeed, such salvation be possible." (56)

The advice he dispenses shows that he views Jane as inferior to her peers, much like the Reeds have done, and the pompous tone further illustrates his contempt for Jane. Brocklehurst wants

Jane punished for the simplest of matters for the sake of "saving her soul" and molding her into a person that fits his notion of a Christian, Even though he attempts to mentor Jane, his call for Jane to be shut out of the students' social circles hurts her. Without interaction, Jane could not become educated and know how to act in life. Instead, she would remain locked in a cycle of ignorance that her headmaster perpetuates. Brocklehurst keeps Jane in a "state of perpetual childhood" (25) that Wollstonecraft advocates against in *Vindication*; he treats Jane as someone who cannot develop a sense of rationality.

Ironically, for someone who deems Jane a liar, none of the words he utters are true, be they lies he heard from Mrs. Reed herself or lies that he fashioned in order to help deliver his message. Brontë depicts Brocklehurst as a person who will go to any lengths to deliver his message, even using her as a "whipping boy." His "cure" for Jane is much like George's cure for Maria – he makes an effort to shut Jane away from any interaction with her peers and acts as if Jane is in an asylum of sorts, because Jane does not measure up to his standards of morality. Brontë depicts Brocklehurst's standards in the first meeting he has with Jane at the Reed household, particularly when he says in regards to Jane's lack of interest in Psalms, "That proves you have a wicked heart" (27). However, unlike George, who shuts Maria up in the asylum merely to keep her out of his life, Brocklehurst uses Jane as an example to teach the girls of Lowood how to behave, implying that associating with her is wicked. The major problem Brontë illustrates in Brocklehurst's character is that he values his form of religious doctrine and will go to lengths to uphold it, even if it means demanding that Jane be isolated and considering her a lost cause for education and fulfillment.

However, Brontë does allow the reader to observe the ways in which John Reed and Brocklehurst influence Jane, as well as mentors such as Miss Temple. For instance, during Jane's

time at the School, Miss Temple quickly proves to be a trusted confidant, giving Jane a sense of comfort and even escape from Mr. Brocklehurst's pretentious, arrogant behavior and demeanor toward Jane. After Mr. Brocklehurst brands Jane a liar for the entire faculty and student body to witness, Miss Temple takes Jane under her wing in Chapter VIII. When Jane and Helen Burns visit Miss Temple, she says to Jane, "We shall think you what you prove yourself to be, my child. Continue to act as a good girl, and you will satisfy me" (60). The line indicates that Miss Temple is a person who is capable of making her own judgments of a character, rather than being influenced by people such as Mr. Brocklehurst – despite his power and standing within Lowood. Brontë also shows that Miss Temple is willing to take a chance on Jane, understanding that Jane does indeed have true potential as a developing woman. This is a departure from "higher" authority figures such as John Reed and Mr. Brocklehurst, since neither of the two men are interested in listening to Jane, even insisting that she be shut away from her peers and have no interaction with them. Miss Temple further shows her ability to prudently draw her conclusions about Jane, in an effort to further help her. When she asks about Jane's life story, Miss Temple tells her, "Well, now, Jane, you know, or at least I will tell you, that when a criminal is accused, he is always allowed to speak in his own defence. You have been charged with falsehood; defend yourself to me as well as you can. Say whatever your memory suggests as true; but add nothing and exaggerate nothing" (60). Brontë uses the moment to show Miss Temple's willingness to guide Jane in regards to morals and virtues, to teach her the importance of honesty, and to show that she has faith in Jane. Additionally, when she advises Jane to "add and exaggerate nothing," Miss Temple teaches Jane to show restraint and responsibility when she interacts with others, mechanisms that help establish her credibility. Janet H. Freeman notes this when she argues, "While the child Jane is learning to be silent and listen, she is at the same time finding the voice

by which to tell her own story, as if the two skills were inseparable" (685). In order to depict Jane's search, Brontë uses Miss Temple's character to assist Jane in finding that voice. Jane's decision to heed Miss Temple's advice helps her in the end, because after she discusses her experiences, Miss Temple tells her, "I shall write to [Mr. Lloyd]; if his reply agrees with your statement, you shall be publicly cleared from every imputation: to me, Jane, you are clear now" (60). The scene shows that Miss Temple is a positive mentor; based on the *OED* definition of mentorship, she guides someone "who is younger and less experienced" (1a).

Not only is the scene powerful in nature, but Brontë offers the reader two completely opposite depictions of a teacher-student relationship. Jane states, "My language was more subdued than it generally was" (60) because she was "exhausted by emotion." However, judging by Jane's conversation with Miss Temple, Brontë implies that Jane's retelling is more of an indicator of her desire to earn Miss Temple's respect and trust. She says, "I infused into the narrative far less of gall and wormwood than ordinary. Thus restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible: I felt as I went on that Miss Temple fully believed me" (60). The passage has a parallel in Maria's memoirs to her daughter advising, "Always appear what you are, and you will not pass through existence without enjoying its genuine blessings, love and respect" (Wollstonecraft 293). Miss Temple's lesson to Jane emphasizing a need to tell her story without exaggeration parallels Maria's advice, because Miss Temple implies that Jane should "appear what she is" and allow her story to develop as it is in order to gain credibility and respect.

As Jane recounts her experiences at the Reed home, Brontë develops her character into one that has become more comfortable around Miss Temple, and has developed a trust for the superintendent – traits essential to an ideal mentoring relationship. As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe, "Repressed as [Miss Temple] is, she is closer to a fairy godmother than

anyone else Jane has met, closer even to a true mother. By the fire in her pretty room, she feeds her starving pupils tea and emblematic seedcake, nourishing body and soul together despite Mr. Brocklehurst's puritanical dicta" (345), a statement reflecting on Miss Temple's willingness to teach Jane how to responsibly tell the story of her life during their visit.

Brontë portrays another example of an educator-student relationship in the relationship between Jane and Adele. When Jane takes a position tutoring Adele, she says, "Adele was not easy to teach that day; she could not apply" (101) and that at one point, she "got a little angry, and made [Adele] sit still" (101). The scene illustrates that Jane is willing to work with Adele; however, she fails to consider Adele's age as a contributor to her lack of attentiveness to her lessons. According to Jane, "[Adele] continued to talk incessantly of her 'ami, Monsieur Edouard Fairfax de Rochester'" (101). Brontë uses the scene to show Jane's lack of patience with Adele in the early stages of their relationship, an issue similar to Brocklehurst's lack of patience for Jane stemming from his notion that Jane deviates from his standards for girls to uphold. Rochester also shows his lack of ability to consider Adele as a rational person during their tea; despite acknowledging her "improvement," he says, "I have examined Adele, and find you have taken great pains with her; she is not bright, she has no talents" (103). Rochester's belief that Adele is "not bright" has a connection to Wollstonecraft's observations concerning a rational education for women. His contempt for Adele's ability to learn and his cold tone toward Adele shows that he does not view her as a person without value. He also fails to put in a reasonable effort to teach and guide her – much like Brocklehurst dismisses Jane during her time at Lowood.

Mentorship continues to be important in the novel, when Jane meets both St. John Rivers. When Jane first arrives at St. John's home, one of the first statements he makes toward Jane is,

"All men must die, but all are not condemned to meet a lingering and premature doom, such as yours would be if you perished here of want" (286). Brontë uses this statement as an indicator of his interest in Jane's well-being, as well as of a moment signifying a turnaround in Jane's life. Moreover, Brontë allows Jane to gradually open up to St. John, retelling her life story, just as she has done when she talked to Miss Temple at Lowood. Yet, she is not fully open to St. John during their first interactions with him, unlike when she first interacts with Miss Temple. When she tells St. John her capabilities and how she is willing to work in order to earn her keep, St. John tells her, "Right. If such is your spirit, I promise to aid you; in my own time and way" (297). The line not only demonstrates his interest in helping Jane in regards to her work, but also as a point he makes in regards to his intention to mentor Jane. Brontë implies in the scene that he is capable of mentoring Jane, but in order to do so, he needs Jane to be more open with him and trust him. Yet, he is unwilling to force her into such a mindset; Jane must develop that trust for him on her own volition. Once that trust is developed, St. John is willing to take on a greater role as a mentor; for the time being, he shows that he can still serve as effectively as possible, but can only work to a point.

Brontë does not depict St. John as a faultless mentor, however; his reaction to Jane's denial of his marriage proposal, while rather harsh, does show that he is a human capable of mistakes. Through her characters, Brontë implies that it is unfair to expect mentors to not make mistakes. While St. John allows Jane to make her own decisions at first as long as she can hold her own in the household, he is under the misconception that he has enough influence on her to secure her hand in marriage. Her denial illustrates a point necessary to make; while mentorship can be beneficial for a person, it is not a complete substitute for human development. Rather, mentorship is more effective as a supplement and a guidance tool for the person on the receiving

end of mentorship. While his assistance certainly is helpful, Jane ultimately is the one responsible for determining what is right for her and how she wants to live her life. She understands that marrying St. John would not be beneficial for her. As she tells Diana this, Jane shows that she is capable of knowing what is right for her own well-being, and that she is capable of restraint in spite of what St. John has to offer her.

When the reader first meets Jane, she does not appear to have an idea of when to restrain herself, throwing herself emotionally and mentally in her interactions with her peers and with adults. Now, she has developed as a rational woman and is capable of reserving herself when circumstances warrant. She further shows this capability by thinking, after reading St. John's note warning her not to enter temptation, "My Spirit is willing to do what is right; and my flesh, I hope, is strong enough to accomplish the will of Heaven, when once that will is distinctly known to me. At any rate, it shall be strong enough to search – inquire – to grope an outlet from this cloud of doubt, and find the open day of certainty" (358). That sentence indicates Jane's decision to consider further the best route to take in regards to St. John's proposal, and her willingness to do what is right for her, as well as for St. John. Her decision suggests that a marriage to St. John would not be fulfilling and have the meaningful love Wollstonecraft posits is essential for a woman to be happy and develop a state of reason. Wollstonecraft states, "Personal attachment is a very happy foundation for friendship" (97). Her statement implies that sexual desire is essential to a marriage, a factor lacking in Jane and St. John's relationship. As a result, the marriage would likely be doomed, as Jane and Rochester would not be able to "render the whole of life respectable, by forming a plan to regulate a friendship which only death ought to dissolve" (Wollstonecraft 97).

Jane understands that there is a limit to what St. John can offer her, and that he cannot provide her with the happiness she needs in order to have a fulfilled marriage. Brontë illustrates that Jane did not get the sense that St. John truly loved her, as Jane tells him, "I should desire somewhat more of affection than that sort of general philanthropy you extend to mere strangers" (351). Her words allude to his Christian principles and sense of morality, implying that these two traits are preventing him from taking on a mentor-lover role. St. John's Christian principles come into play again before he leaves for Cambridge, as he asks Jane not only to consider marrying him, but to "repent – resolve; while there is yet time" (356). Brontë uses St. John's statement to imply that he relies on coercion to get Jane to submit to his desires – a departure from Darnford and George Venables in *Maria*, as they rely on charms and passion to win Maria's love. Despite his intent to mentor Jane, St. John uses religion to emotionally confine her in order to fulfill his wish to have Jane marry him. St. John's attempts at mental coercion echo George's decision to physically confine Maria in the asylum in order to fulfill his desires in life without having Maria interfere with his efforts.

Finally, Brontë portrays Rochester as a mentor-lover. While he does not actively mentor Jane throughout the novel, his life experiences and relationship with Jane further shapes her ability to better herself and make her own life decisions, a key goal of a mentoring relationship. By sharing his life story, Rochester provokes Jane to assess his character and ultimately decide to take him as a husband.

Rochester is capable of making mistakes, just as St. John is. Wollstonecraft discusses a key point in *Vindication* when she claims, "Men are certainly more under the influence of their appetites than women; and their appetites are more depraved by unbridled indulgence and the fastidious contrivances of society" (168). Wollstonecraft's statement connects strongly to

Rochester's character, particularly where his marriage to Bertha Mason is concerned. For example, Rochester married Bertha Mason not out of love and devotion for her, but out of worship of her wealth and physical beauty, an issue Wollstonecraft mentions in *Vindication*. Rochester refers to his motives in his story regarding "a wild boy indulged from childhood upwards" (Brontë 185), when he states in regards to the boy – Rochester in reality – "you wander here and there, seeking rest in exile: happiness in pleasure – I mean in heartless, sensual pleasure" (Brontë 186). Bertha's beauty and wealth, as well as Rochester's marriage to Bertha, represent the sensual pleasure in his story. Ultimately, the infatuation and Rochester's inability to understand Bertha for the person she is prevent him from learning how he can effectively help her as his wife. The infatuation ties back to Wollstonecraft's mention of Maria's infatuation with George, as Maria also fails to see George for the libertine he is and has no idea of how she can interact effectively with him. The infatuation proves to be a critical flaw for both characters, as they find themselves unable to overcome the difficulties the spouses pose for them. In *The Wrongs of Woman,* George shuts Maria up in an asylum; in *Jane Eyre,* Rochester shuts Bertha up in the attic, the novel's "asylum." The scene alone pinpoints Rochester's inability to serve as a suitable mentor – as her husband, the reader likely would have expected Rochester to do everything in his power to show that he is interested in Bertha's well-being and that he is willing to invest time in helping her develop a rational sense. However, Brontë does illustrate a trait in him similar to one in Brocklehurst. Based on their false perception of the characters they interact with, Brocklehurst and Rochester dismiss Jane and Bertha, respectively, as lost causes unworthy of recognition and assistance. That is not to say that the motives behind those traits are the same; Brocklehurst dismisses Jane as a lost cause due to his pompous, arrogant, grandstanding demeanor. On the other hand, due to being overwhelmed by her beauty and his passion,

Rochester does not know how best to deal with Bertha, and is unwilling to make an effort to do so.

Yet, Rochester does redeem himself in his interactions with Jane. Patricia Menon notes that while he is a less-than-ideal mentor, "Rochester isn't really much of a rake at all, or rather he is a fantasy rake, the hurt soul searching for love, rejecting his mistresses because of their lack of principle and feeling, himself capable of recognizing and responding to a good woman" (105). Her words tie into Brontë's portrayal of Rochester as he tells his story, and further strengthen Brontë's idea that much of Rochester's inability to develop meaningful relationships is a result of indulgence continuing from childhood into adulthood.

One example of Rochester mentoring Jane occurs in Chapter XIII, during their discussion of Jane's art. He notices Jane's potential as an artist, telling her, "You have not enough of the artist's skill and science to give it full being: yet the drawings are, for a schoolgirl, peculiar" (108). In the scene, Rochester encourages Jane to improve her work, offering her suggestions to incorporate in her paintings, such as when he critiques the eyes in one painting. Rochester asks, "How could you make them look so clear, and yet not at all brilliant?" (108) The scene shows that Rochester has an interest in guiding Jane toward thinking about what she puts in her paintings, and how she can improve their quality.

Rochester continues to overcome his indulgent attitudes by getting to know Jane, and he eventually learns to view and love Jane—who possesses neither wealth nor beauty—for who she is and has become. Moreover, Brontë implies that his love for Jane stems from his learning about the perils of infatuation, and any infatuation for Jane fades over the course of the novel, especially by the time he marries Jane. Rochester shows that he is genuinely happy to have Jane back in his life, regardless of her newfound wealth – as evidenced when, after Jane points out

that her uncle left her the five thousand pounds, he asks her, "And you will stay with me?" (370). When she answers in the affirmative – unless he objected, he tells her, "No – no – Jane: you must not go. No – I have touched you, heard you, felt the comfort of your presence – the sweetness of your consolation: I cannot give up these joys" (371). Rochester's statement indicates that he understands the gifts she has given him, and has learned to overlook the material aspects of a woman's life, something he did not do when he first met Bertha.

Lara Freeburg Kees notes that a "seed of sympathy grows in Rochester as his feelings for Jane grow stronger" (880). The race hierarchy affecting Jane and Rochester's relationship is a major issue in Kees' article. The article examines the racial differences in his previous relationships, particularly Bertha. Kees states, "Rochester has explored – and ultimately disliked – racial difference in his sexual partners. After his marriage to the Creole Bertha failed, he returned to England and kept three different foreign mistresses" (881). Kees' statement implies that cross-race mentoring within Rochester's past relationships with women is not possible, given that he has no emotional attachment to the other women as he has to Jane, an interest necessary for any kind of relationship to thrive.

In addition, Kees' article notes Jane's "fight against inequities" and how it reaches its climax when she "proclaims her equality with Rochester" (885). The argument has its parallels to Wollstonecraft's implied standard regarding mentorship, as the reader sees that the mentorship Jane receives has helped her develop her spiritual and emotional health, as well as her ability to think rationally. Much of the development comes from Rochester's role in her life as a mentor-lover, primarily as the Jane-Rochester relationship helps Jane learn to make significant decisions for herself in an attempt to find happiness and her sense of self. For instance, after she discovers Bertha Mason, Jane says, "Mr. Rochester was not to me what he had been, for he was not what I

thought him" (252) Upon this realization, Jane decides to leave Thornfield, prompted further by her mother's ghost telling her, "My daughter, flee temptation!" (272) While Rochester's secrecy hurt Jane, Brontë uses the discovery of Bertha to show that Jane knows, for the time being, the best route to take in order to ensure her happiness and sense of security. Rochester, however, is not the only character who helps Jane make progress in her life, particularly as Miss Temple and St. John Rivers help her learn how to converse with others and how to think for herself.

Brontë uses Rochester's character to show that those who are willing to learn from their past errors will likely become the best mentors. The fact that he knows how he contributed to someone's fall and shows regret and remorse for his contributions is a major factor highlighting his ability to develop his role as a mentor. As a result, the lessons depicted in the novel allow Jane and Rochester to not only trust and love each other, but marry by the end of the novel. In fact, because Rochester is blind by the end of the novel, it is up to Jane to assume the role of guide, the role of a mentor-lover. Thus, Brontë shows that the relationship between Jane and Rochester illustrates how mentorship, once it reaches its maximum potential, can change lives for the greater good and highlight a person's development into a stronger character worthy of respect and honor. The relationship also shows that mentors can shift into a mentee role.

In regards to Jane's development, critics such as Esther Godfrey focus on the development as a lesson in feminism. Godfrey, for example, argues, "During the course of the novel, Jane slips from the androgyny associated with her working-class background and her age into parodies of femininity and eventually into a legitimized form of female masculinity" (868). Similarly, Menon notes in her book that, "On the strength of Jane's lament that 'women feel just as men feel' (133), and her resistance to the domination of both Rochester and St John, it might be possible to argue that this is a feminist document" (108). Godfrey and Menon both make valid

points, but Brontë attributes much of Jane's development to her ability to both develop a sense of happiness and fulfillment and learn to live and make decisions for herself. Additionally, despite the wishes of some of her past authority figures, Jane ultimately learns to develop a mindset for herself, as well as determine the ways in which she can live for herself.

Brontë implies that the ultimate goal of mentorship – to help a person elevate to a level where they are capable of functioning as fulfilled, happy, and emotionally stable – has been realized once Jane develops such a mindset. She helps the reader see the development through the ways in which Jane communicates with her superiors over the course of the novel, as well as through the ways in which her relationships develop her ability to make rational decisions for herself, factors that adhere to Wollstonecraft's suggestions that women learn to develop an ability to reason. Ultimately, these methods contribute to Jane becoming a stronger character over the course of the novel and show the reader that she has found the real "Jane Eyre."

Chapter Four: Conclusion: A Continuous Connection?

Thus far, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman,* and *Jane Eyre* belong to at least two known literary canons: the British literary canon and the feminist literary canon. While I certainly don't deny that the texts have a place in either canon, I see a potential for the texts to be a part of a canon devoted to mentorship as well.

By itself, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* helps readers develop an understanding of what Wollstonecraft considers an ideal mentoring relationship, based on the grievances she delivers to her male audience and her suggestions to remedy her grievances. Despite the controversy surrounding her words, her text makes an important point: the status quo within the marriages she observes ultimately benefits no one. Yet, her words imply that successful marriages cannot exist without mentorship in the couple's lives, and that an ongoing mentoring relationship can further strengthen a marriage. Moreover, *Vindication* teaches the reader that a married couple must not only have a meaningful love, but must also be able to communicate and guide each other in order for the marriage to survive on a strong foundation.

Both *Maria* and *Jane Eyre* depict the consequences resulting from both adherence to and violations of Wollstonecraft's principles set forth in *Vindication* within marriages. However, the principles are not exclusive to marriage. Instead, Wollstonecraft's philosophy applies to meaningful relationships of any kind, be they a relationship between friends or a relationship between an educator and student, for example. Even today, Wollstonecraft's ideology applies to relationships. Additionally, the ideology applies to mentoring relationships, particularly as readers see how mentoring does not occur in the texts. Wollstonecraft allows the reader to see the potential for men to become mentors to women; however, she also notes that the men must be willing to show concern and interest in the women's lives. Furthermore, as depicted in *Maria*

and *Jane Eyre,* the men must not abuse their mentees; otherwise, the mentoring relationship cannot exist.

The texts also show that the term "abuser" is not concrete. While Wollstonecraft and Brontë provide depictions of blatant abuse through characters such as Maria's parents, Jemima's masters, Mr. Brocklehurst, and John Reed, they also use characters such as St. John Rivers and Darnford as perpetuators of abuse, mainly through emotionally driven behavior. In the case of Darnford, Wollstonecraft shows that his relationship with Maria is one based on lust instead of a true love. To make matters worse, while Maria views Darnford as a mentor-lover, two of the seven fractured endings of *Maria* depict Darnford as a betrayer when he impregnates and leaves Maria.

By contrast, St. John appears in *Jane Eyre* to be a mentor to Jane at first. However, he gradually slips into the role of abuser when he presses Jane to marry him, citing religion as a weapon when she turns down his proposal. Such behavior implies zealotry on St. John's part and indicates that he ultimately does not have much interest in what truly makes Jane happy.

However, not all mentors are ideal, and the mentoring relationship is one that, like marriage, requires work and development for it to be successful. Such a relationship develops in *Maria* and *Jane Eyre* with characters such as Jemima, Miss Temple, and Jane Eyre serving as mentors; the characters communicate openly with their mentees and even provide details about their lives. As for characters such as Rochester, they do not immediately take on the role of mentor, but they are responsible for shaping their "mentee's" lives and helping them discover ways to secure happiness and fulfillment.

By no means should these works be stripped from their current canons. However, the perspective I offer is that these works have a place within a new canon of literature due to their

depictions of mentorship at work. Moreover, Wollstonecraft's philosophies are likely applicable to other works of literature as well, whether they are classics or novels that are more modern. As readers, we should think further about the mentoring relationships present in a variety of texts, as well as their authors' historical understandings of gender. This inquiry can be extended to other works of literature concerning gender and mentorship, from earlier texts such as William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina.* By understanding the contexts within the texts, we can see the parallels they have where mentorship and gender relationships are concerned.

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